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STATE FOR ISN/WMDT (TLOWE), OES/FO, EUR/WE (TSMITH)
DEFENSE FOR OSD/ATL (DBINIAZ)

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [TRGY](#) [KRAD](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/NUSOG: REMEDIATION STILL AN ISSUE

REF: THE HAGUE 397

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael Gallagher, reasons
1.4 (a) and (d)

11. (S) Summary and action request: The issue of whether to discuss remediation under the Netherlands - United States Operational Group (NUSOG) auspices once again proved contentious at the NUSOG Plenary on June 18-19. The Dutch argued that environmental remediation in the event of an incident involving a U.S. nuclear weapon or component is an integral part of the NUSOG, and outlined plans for a "first step" remediation workshop -- hopefully with USG participation -- to be held later in the year. The U.S. delegation questioned whether any discussion of remediation falls under the NUSOG mandate. A temporary compromise was reached when the Dutch agreed to hold the workshop outside of the NUSOG, to which they would invite U.S. experts whom post would help identify. Dutch civilian and military participants were visibly agitated by the U.S. position questioning whether remediation is an appropriate topic for discussion in the NUSOG. It is clear the Dutch attach great importance to this issue; Post believes non-engagement is untenable and could negatively impact our bilateral relationship with a strong ally. We urge the Department to identify guidelines or parameters in which limited engagement on remediation in the NUSOG is possible. End summary and action request.

The Crux of the Matter

12. (C) CDA and Emboffs attended the NUSOG Plenary on June 18-19 in Amsterdam. As anticipated, the issue of remediation led to a contentious and at times heated discussion. The Dutch maintained that since remediation, that is, not just financial responsibility but all issues concerning clean-up, is identified as one of the functional areas in the NUSOG and is discussed in the Implementing Joint Operation Plan (IJOP), it is an integral part of the NUSOG and an appropriate topic of discussion. Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) Crisis Management Division Director, Chris Dijkens, gave an overview of a remediation workshop with a broad agenda that the Dutch had previously proposed for October or November 2008. Dijkens acknowledged that remediation was admittedly a "complicated subject" that lacked a clear definition. He suggested the workshop would be used as a "first step" to acquaint Dutch actors with U.S. subject matter experts, the results of which could potentially be used to help develop a Dutch national remediation plan.

13. (C) In response, the U.S. co-chair questioned whether a

policy-level discussion on remediation fell under the NUSOG mandate. He pointed out that unlike other functional areas, there is no tasking in the NUSOG to establish a remediation working group, and that language regarding remediation is purposefully vague. This in effect creates a "chicken or egg" scenario in which an operational group such as the NUSOG should not discuss remediation issues without clear policy -- nor should the NUSOG attempt to create remediation policy in its absence. Dijkens agreed that NUSOG was not a policy-making body, but argued that the proposed workshop would not address policy issues. CDA stated that the U.S. delegation could not engage on this issue without official guidance, but that we would report Dutch questions and concerns back to Washington.

14. (S) Side discussions yielded a temporary compromise -- the Dutch will organize an internal/GONL remediation workshop outside the NUSOG to begin developing a national remediation plan, to which they would invite U.S. experts. The workshop will remain on the NUSOG five-year training calendar for informational purposes only. Dutch civilian and military participants were visibly agitated by the U.S. position questioning whether remediation is an appropriate topic for discussion in the NUSOG; DAO Air Attache reported that in a side conversation the Dutch co-chair hinted to him that if the USG remains unwilling to engage on remediation, the Dutch might have to consider reviewing overflight rights.

The Proposed Workshop: Questions Beyond Financial Liability

15. (C) Dijkens presented a proposal for an all-encompassing NUSOG remediation workshop whose ultimate goal would be to develop a remediation plan based on information gathered during proposed discussions between Dutch and U.S. subject matter experts over the issue. The broad agenda would include a discussion of fundamental questions such as what is meant by remediation, contamination, and cleanup, as well as response organization, information management, legal issues, safety, zoning, communication, finances, logistics, and elements necessary for developing a remediation plan. The Dutch would also welcome a discussion of U.S. experiences with remediation. Participants would include relevant government and local community representatives, and emergency fire responders. Dijkens stated that the GONL does not currently have a national remediation plan, although he later acknowledged that a patchwork of policies exists on specific issues such as cleaning up contaminated soil. (Note: Dijkens denied that VROM had discussions regarding remediation with U.S. experts outside the NUSOG. However, he later confirmed that experts from his ministry frequently met with their U.S. counterparts on technical and other issues. End note.)

Comment and Action Request

16. (S) Post received ISN/WMDT's preliminary response to our May 9 guidance request (reftel), which stated the U.S. position that remediation is primarily an issue of financial liability, and therefore should not be discussed in the NUSOG. We are convinced that a policy of absolute non-engagement is untenable, and will negatively impact our bilateral relationship with a strong ally. Recently, the Dutch media reported on a Time magazine article questioning the safety of U.S. thermonuclear weapons stored in several European countries, including the Netherlands, as well as the recent visit of USAFE Commander Gen. Brady to Volkel AFB. Public and parliamentary interest is rising. The Dutch will continue to raise this issue, presumably at higher levels. Agreeing to discuss any aspect of remediation is potentially a slippery slope, but perhaps a limited discussion is possible, provided strict ground rules make clear that financial liability is not open for discussion. Participation by U.S. subject-matter experts in the Dutch internal remediation workshop this fall also could help assuage Dutch remediation concerns. We urge the Department to identify guidelines or parameters in which engagement on remediation in the NUSOG is possible. End comment and action request.

¶7. (U) The next NUSOG plenary is tentatively scheduled for November 17-19, to be hosted by the United States in Germany.

Gallagher